

National Catholic Theater Conference

PRODUCTION CALENDAR

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WICHITA WEEK-END

Wichita will celebrate its third Annual Diocesan Catholic Theatre Week-End April 28-29. Mt. Carmel Academy plays host and entertainer with Barrie's "Quality Street." Sister Mary Xavier, B.V.M. director of the Academy group, has planned a cordial welcome for her neighbors. Conference President Charles S. Costello will be the chief speaker of the weekend conference,

FOR YOUR CONVENIENCE

With this issue the Production Calendar announces two more service lines. The first - at the suggestion of Father O'Kane and with the help of Mrs. Wyatt, drama critic of The Catholic World - is a column "Speaking Critically" commenting briefly on all Broadway and touring shows. As new plays appear in New York, this list will be amended.

In next month's issue we inaugurate the practice of including in each Production Calendar a separate sheet giving complete information on one play of note now available to amateurs. The Conference believes that the evaluation sheets published five years ago at Washington were most convenient for reference, and is following the form set up at that time.

HONOR SOCIETIES

Sister Mary Donatus, C.I.M., alert to spur her drama students at Immaculata College to highest achievement, has examined the various honor societies giving recognition to exceptional ability in acting and production. The result of her research Sister generously offers to Conference members.

"We learned that there are three national dramatic honor societies: Delta Psi Omega, Theta Alpha Phi, and Pi Epsilon Delta (known as The National Collegiate Players). All have in common the purposes of stimulating and rewarding worthwhile participation in college dramatics; the last named adds to these: to unite colleges in national movements to forward drama and theater in our country and to raise the standards of the college theater by recognition of group and individual efforts in creative theater arts, thus helping to establish a community culture.

"Delta Psi Omega claims to be the largest honor society, having a chapter roll of 139. National organ is 'The Playbill' published by Paul F. Opp, Box 347, Fairmount, W. Va.

"A college petitioning for a chapter of Theta Alpha Phi must have a rating of Class A in North Central Association of Colleges. A few, not too difficult requirements for eligibility of individual students. National organ is 'The Cue.' A. E. Cloetingh, Penna. State College, Pa. is National Secretary-Treasurer; all communications should be addressed to him.

The National Collegiate Players offers the greatest challenge, it seems to us, its requirements being more detailed and more exacting. Thirty-six colleges are listed on chapter roll. 'The Players Magazine,' national organ, is published monthly during school year. The N. C. P. Standard Point System is a very good guide in determining the eligibility of students for entrance into the fraternity. Emphasis is placed on points gained in academic courses; 1 point is given for each hour credit and 5 points are minimum for each member.

"It seems to us here at Immaculata that entering a national honorary dramatic society might be another way in which our students might sow abroad the seeds of understanding of our heritage, with the hope that these same seeds may develop in to a better knowledge of our Catholic faith in the future."

MISS LIBERTY

"Liberty Jones," St. Catherine's Players' first big attempt beyond the purely realistic, won 25 curtain calls and bid from Racine's businessmen for re-production in a downtown theater. More important to the future of the group was their thrilling experience with "the thing of beauty we made. Our school and our town have benefitted immeasurably."

Endless amount of work, calling forth the utmost skill in design, in interpretative skill, untiring patience with actors who had never attempted symbolism ... of course, but Sister Honora, O.P., adds they are genuinely happy that they dared.

Reporting concretely on their production, Sister writes that the musical background, important to the play, was written by one of their own boys. "The first scene ... simplified realism; burgundy, gray blue and ivory for color scheme; Uncle Sam in business suit, Aunt Gloria in svelte black Liberty in ice-blue and corise. The remaining four scenes of the play, the dream we made sheer fantasy in costume, lighting and sets ... Liberty's couch with a star-spangled spread raised on a dais against a black cyclorama; all characters from this point on carried a touch of red, white and blue and danced on and off; the element of fancy was emphasized by spot-lighting with revolving color wheel."

Scenic highlights were the parlor with its early-morning air, and roof terrace for the wedding. Sister more specifically says "Frank Sinatra has never rated a bigger gasp of sheer delight from an audience than did our bridal couple when they ran through the archway formed by bridesmaids and ushers!"

Even the villains of the piece took thorough enjoyment in their parts and costumes, the tremendous overcoats used in the original Theatre Guild production.

The only regrettable note was that Racine was destitute of photographic film at production time.

Our heartiest congratulations to the Players of St. Catherine's High School. We are confident that they have added to the stature of their audience and themselves in their adventurous production of "Liberty Jones." They are indeed privileged to follow so courageous and inspiring a leader.

SPRING FAVORITES

Edgecliff Players, Our Lady of Cincinnati College, are happy in their choice of "Murder in a Nunnery" for their May production: "The play is beautifully written and it plays well." Rehearsals have already begun, so Sister Mary Hildegard, R. S. M., Director, knows whereof she speaks.

The New York Blackfriars' last offering this season will be "Earth Journey" a delicate Chinese fantasy. Opening date now fixed at April 27.

Dramatic Association of the College of St. Elizabeth is rehearsing "Junior Miss" for April 29 production.

Rev. E. A. Hannick, Moderator, Catholic Theatre of Detroit, has directed production of "Bartor" the Lenten drama written by Rev. Urban Nagle, O.P. Nineteen performances are scheduled March 23 to April 6th, with Saturday and Sunday matinees.

The Speech Department of College of St. Francis, Joliet, is spotlighting Better Speech Week, April 16th - 25th, with an evening of one-act plays, a premiere performance by the verse speaking choir of "Song of the Khaki Christ" by Rev. J. J. Galvin, C.S.S.R., and a full length children's program. "Grey Broad," "To the Lovely Margaret" (prize winning play of Play Magazine Contest), and "Three Cents a Day" are the one-act plays selected. The entire department through its debate units and radio classes, cooperates with local broadcasting units in patriotic skits, speeches and plays. During the week faculty and students are welcome guests in Speech classes.

"Mothers" is the title of a new verse play written by Therese Marie Cuny. Verse Choir of Loretto High, Chicago, Ill. will present it in May under direction of Miss Cuny. Also on her directing schedule are: "Letters to Lucerne" at Loretto Academy Chicago; "From Nine Till Six" at St. Mary's Academy, Prairie du Chien; and two productions of "Don't Take My Penny" at Academy of Our Lady and Loretto High School, both Chicago.

Sister Charitas ended her long hunt for suitable class play with selection of "Murder in a Nunnery." Sister directs the active dramatic group at Academy of Holy Angels, Minneapolis. Mr. Lavery writes us that Pasadena Playhouse is also preparing for a mid-June production of the mystery-comedy.

WITH OUR MEMBERS

Pittsburgh's Catholic Theatre Guild has moved to 206 Stanwix Street. New headquarters include large rehearsal hall and offices, and the central location has increased interest in Guild activities.

Marydessie Blayney, Play Reading Committee chief, is rounding up all possibilities for the final production of the season. It is to be comedy. The prestige of the Guild, increased by "The Comedian" has brought added responsibility.

Father O'Kane stopped in New York for a day to check on supplies for that fast-moving religious article shop maintained by the Richmond Guild. Though time was short, Father brought us up to date on the current adaptation of their annual Passion Play (this year in the life of Father Aloysius Schmidt, first chaplain to die in this war and former classmate of Father O'Kane, we see the application of the Stations of the Cross); made valuable suggestions for Conference work; and examined "Tomorrow the World" with a new eye to Richmond production.

Mrs. Christopher Wyatt, in a recent radio address discussing old and new Catholic theatre, cited the Conference as prime evidence of constructive Catholic theatre in operation. Mrs. Wyatt speaks up for the Conference at every opportunity; we count her support one of our greatest assets.

The Cathespian Guild has invited Rev. Urban Nagle, O.P., active Blackfriar, to Montreal to address the group in conjunction with the local Catholic Drama Festival. Father Nagle en route to Montreal will stop off at Bridgeport, Connecticut, to address the Junior Guild on behalf of Blackfriars' Guild and the Conference.

An inquiry from Canada reminds us that young Conference members may not be familiar with three one-act plays printed by the Conference in 1939 - 40 in the quarterly Catholic Theatre, "to exploit insofar as possible works by Catholic authors that in our judgment are outstanding and deserve the attention of drama groups seeking new and meritorious scripts. The three plays are: "Chiara" by Patricia O'Neill, based on an incident in the life of St. Thomas Aquinas, 2 m, 1 f; "The Infinite Bridge" by Joseph I. Dirvin, a fantasy for 3 m, 1 f; "Of Equal Dust" by Vincent A. Carlin, requiring three men. The last, a social drama, we believe would be of especial interest to Seminary groups.

SPEAKING CRITICALLY

Angel Street - The Victorian melodrama with no murders but plenty of thrills.

*Arsenic and Old Lace - Melodrama with as many laughs as corpses. Fourth year.

Carmen Jones - Extraordinary production, imaginative and lively. Its Metropolitan original pales in comparison.

*Decision - Not particularly distinguished dramatization of fascism on the home front though characterization is strong.

Early to Bed - Beautiful set, but dirty libretto, music and dancing not above average

Jacobowsky and the Colonel - Weirfel and Behrman combined forces to produce this amusing and exciting contrast of a romantic Pole and a practical Jew, both refugees. Mrs. Wyatt highly recommends the latest Guild production.

*Kiss and Tell - A comedy of adolescence which turns a theme usually tragic into comedy. It relies on sound characterization and skates over thin ice. Not for children.

*Life with Father - Still the best comedy since 1939.

Lovers and Friends - A distinguished play both in writing and acting; though it is not written from Catholic standpoint, it upholds a faithful wife.

Mexican Hayride - Bobby Clark, beautiful sets and costumes.

*Oklahoma - An order sent to the St. James box office on Dec. 27 won a response on March 17 with tickets for a May 20 performance. Oklahoma's popularity has not waned.

One Touch of Venus - Except for Mary Martin, very disappointing despite two fine ballets, lyrics by Ogden Nash and music by Kurt Weill.

Over 21 - Light but funny comedy of married life at an officers' training camp.

Ramshackle Inn - Zasu Pitts is amusing in a farce melodrama lacking the originality of Arsenic and Old Lace.

The Doughgirls - Thoroughly tough, cheap farce.

The Voice of the Turtle - The most immoral and insidious play of many seasons.

Tomorrow the World - A strong, timely conflict depending for its reality upon the abilities of two children.

The Two Mrs. Carrolls - Rather extravagant melodrama made plausible by Bergner's excellent playing.

*Three Is a Family - Dull farce.

Wallflower - Immoral, vulgar, stupid farce, badly played - quite revolting.

Winged Victory - Army Air Forces can put on a good show, in the air or on the stage.

Othello - Most talked of Shakespearean production in years. Paul Robeson and Jose Ferrer are worth the attention.

The Cherry Orchard - Read Chekhov and then see the Webster-LeGallienne production for the best lesson in acting and directing to be found on Broadway.

*Porgy and Bess - The American opera.

The titles starred above are currently appearing on Broadway and on the road.

The following, according to latest information, are on road tours:

A Connecticut Yankee - Scenery elaborate, music so-so, humor heavy.

Janie - Pleasant little comedy about a young girl who disobeys her parents and entertains the soldiers.

Something for the Boys - Beautiful sets, lively music, and decent for a Cole Porter show written for Ethel Merman.

The Patriots - An unusually fine biographical play contrasting Jefferson, Washington and Hamilton.

Blithe Spirit - Noel Coward's brilliant satire on spiritualism.

Junior Miss - The most popular teen-age comedy.

Sons O' Fun - Rowdy Olson and Johnson over again.

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Cuo and Curtain Players of Immaculate College tripled on March 17 with Yeats' "Cathleen ni Houlihan," a scene from Synge's "Deirdre," and an extravaganza number. For their Lenton production Sister Donatus, C.I.M., wrote her own interpretation of the grief of the women who followed Christ to Calvary. "You Who Pass By" was the title chosen from the lamentations of Jeremiah....Emmet Lavery reports some excellent new scripts received from servicemen at home and abroad for the National Theatre Conference playwriting contest.

